

## CLAIMS

1. Method of producing slabs made of granulated stone materials and/or sand bound with a hardenable resin, of the type in which a mixture of granulated stone material and/or sand and hardenable resin is spread on a support so as to form a layer of substantially uniform thickness, the support being protected by a sheet material interposed between the upper surface of the support and the layer of mixture, the support is transferred to a station for vibratory compaction under vacuum, care being taken to protect the upper surface of the layer of mixture with a sheet material superimposed on the layer before it reaches the station and, after the vibratory compaction under vacuum, the support with the layer of compacted mixture is transferred to a hardening station, the said sheet material also being highly resilient, characterized in that the flat configuration of the lower sheet is replaced by a shaped configuration comprising a flat base and a peripheral frame projecting from the said flat base for a predetermined height so as to define a seat of dimensions corresponding in plan to those of the slab to be produced, the aforementioned peripheral frame having a height which is lower by a predetermined amount than that of the final slab to be produced so that, after compaction, a space of predetermined depth remains between the peripheral edge of the upper sheet and the top of the aforementioned frame.
2. Method according to Claim 1, characterized in that the lower sheet is constituted by a cloth of inextensible fabric covered with a layer of rubber on both sides.
3. Method according to Claim 2, characterized in that the cloth of inextensible fabric is subjected to a pretensioning treatment before being covered with the layers of rubber.
4. Method according to Claim 1, characterized in that the rubber which covers the said inextensible cloth can withstand temperatures of between 80 and 150°C and chemical agents.
5. Method according to Claim 1, characterized in that the said upper sheet has a configuration which is a mirror image of that of the said lower sheet so that the said empty space or cavity is located in the vicinity of the horizontal median plane of the final slab.
6. Method according to Claim 1, characterized in that an insert is fixed to the lower surface of the said upper sheet in order partially to fill the empty cavity or space formed between the peripheral edges of the said lower and upper sheets when they enclose a metered quantity of mixture.
7. Method according to Claim 1, characterized in that projections extend from the said flat base of the lower sheet and/or from the surface of the said upper sheet which comes into contact with the said mixture in order to form recesses or holes in the finished slab.

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8. Method according to Claim 1, characterized in that, in order to produce slabs already divided into a plurality of blocks or tiles, one of the two sheets, preferably the lower one, carries a lattice-like structure projecting from the surface facing towards the mixture.
9. Shaped sheet usable for the production of slabs from a mixture constituted by granulated stone material and/or sand and by a binding resin according to the method of Claim 1, characterized in that it comprises a flat base and a peripheral frame projecting from the said flat base for a predetermined height so as to define a seat of dimensions corresponding in plan to those of the slab to be produced, the said predetermined height being lower by a predetermined amount than that of the final slab to be produced so that, after compaction, a space of predetermined depth remains between the peripheral edge of the upper sheet and the top of the aforementioned frame.
10. Shaped sheet according to Claim 9, characterized in that the said rim or frame has an inner surface, inclined at an angle of less than  $90^\circ$  to the vertical plane, for contact with the said mixture deposited on the flat base.
11. Shaped sheet according to Claim 10, characterized in that the said inclination of the said contact surface is between  $45^\circ$  and  $90^\circ$ .
12. Shaped sheet according to Claim 9, characterized in that the said rim or frame has an upwardly concave curved inner surface for contact with the said mixture.
13. Shaped sheet according to Claim 9, characterized in that it has a composite structure constituted by a cloth of inextensible material covered with a layer of rubber on both sides.
14. Shaped sheet according to Claim 13, characterized in that the said cloth of inextensible material is subjected to a pretensioning treatment.
15. Shaped sheet according to Claim 9, characterized in that a flat appendage which can be gripped by pincer pulling and transfer means is provided along at least one side of the sheet.
16. Shaped sheet according to Claim 9, characterized in that, in order to form slabs divided in advance into a plurality of tiles or blocks, a lattice-like structure is provided, projecting from the surface of at least one of the said sheets facing the mixture.
17. Shaped sheet according to Claim 9, characterized in that projections for forming recesses or holes in the finished slab extend from the said flat base of the said lower sheet which contacts the said mixture.